

Exhibit 49



Permanent Observer Mission of The State of Palestine to the United Nations New York

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24 July 2020 – Escalating Israeli violations in Occupied Palestine

 24 JULY 2020 BY PALESTINE AT THE UN

As the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate, I am compelled to write in follow-up of our recent letters regarding the crimes being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, as it forges ahead with its expansionist policies in the West Bank, cementing its illegal occupation and escalating its aggression against the Palestinian people, their land and their rights.

That Israel "refrained" from formally annexing large parts of the West Bank on 1 July should not be cause for relief among the international community. As stressed by Mr. Daniel Levy, President of the US/Middle East Project, in his briefing to the Security Council on 21 July, *"Refraining from de jure annexation must of course carry no reward; avoidance of criminality is normative not prize-worthy"*.

It is clear the occupying Power has opted, for now, to go with its tried-and-tested colonization playbook and carry on with its incremental, yet persistent, confiscation and annexation of Palestinian land. The fact is that Israel's decades-long colonization of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has been – and continues to be – implemented gradually, in "installments", with the aim of mitigating, or even silencing, international pushback, even as the occupation gravely breaches international law and shreds the prospects for a two-State solution on the pre-1967 borders as envisaged by the international consensus.

Since the occupation began, successive Israeli governments have pursued a strategy aimed at appropriating as much Palestinian geography with as little Palestinian demography as possible through a two-pronged approach of settling the land while expelling Palestinian civilians. This remains the case, and will continue to be so, unless the international community responds with consequences for such illegal actions.

We reiterate that whether annexation is implemented partially or totally, gradually or in one fell swoop, *de facto* or *de jure*, the international community must stay alert and take serious, tangible action, in respect of international law and relevant UN resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016).

Here it is imperative to recall that, already in 2004, the International Court of Justice warned that *"the construction of the wall and its associated régime create a 'fait accompli' on the ground that could well become permanent, in which case...it would be tantamount to a de facto annexation."* This 9 July marked 16 years since that finding: yet the Wall has only expanded in size, as

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Here it is imperative to recall that, already in 2004, the International Court of Justice warned that "*the construction of the wall and its associated régime create a 'fait accompli' on the ground that could well become permanent, in which case...it would be tantamount to a de facto annexation.*" This 9 July marked 16 years since that finding; yet the Wall has only expanded in size, as have Israel's illegal settlements in our land, which the Wall was clearly established to incorporate into Israel. This constitutes acquisition of territory by force, which is absolutely prohibited under international law.

In this period, Israel has continued to "prepare the ground" for annexation by escalating its settlement activities, destruction of Palestinian property, and forcible transfer of Palestinians residing in areas earmarked for annexation. On 6 July, Israeli occupying forces handed demolition orders against 30 Palestinian homes in the Issawiya neighborhood of East Jerusalem. On the same day, Israel announced plans to build 164 units in the so-called "Neve Daniel" settlement in southern Bethlehem. The occupying Power also continues its harassment and intimidation of Palestinian officials, including the Governor of Jerusalem, Mr. Adnan Ghaith, who has been repeatedly arrested since assuming his functions and remains detained as of this writing.

Acts of settler violence have also risen. This includes the case of settlers trespassing the land of a Palestinian farmer and digging it up to build a swimming pool for themselves and the seizure of yet another hilltop and establishment of yet another settlement "outpost" north of the city of Nablus on land privately owned by Palestinians from the nearby town of Asira al-Shamaliya. All of this is being done under the watch, and with the direct protection and assistance, of the Israeli occupying forces, as part of the systematic theft and colonization of Palestinian land.

The occupying Power also continues its attempt to erase Palestinian presence, culture and heritage through the illegal appropriation and theft of heritage sites, particularly in the Old City of Jerusalem, in Bethlehem, and in Al-Khalil (Hebron) at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque. This week witnessed the theft of baptismal font dating back to the Byzantine era from Bethlehem, adding to the long list of artifacts and heritage stolen by the occupation. Pillage is a war crime and Israel must be held accountable.

Awareness that Israel is forging ahead at full speed to destroy the two-State solution has led politicians, academics, think tanks, public figures, civil society actors, and people of conscience from around the world to warn about the dramatic consequences that the destruction of this solution would have.

Below are excerpts of just some of the many recent statements in this regard:

On 29 June, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet stated that "*any attempt to annex any part of the occupied Palestinian territory will not only seriously damage efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, it is likely to entrench, perpetuate and further heighten serious human rights violations that have characterized the conflict for decades. I am deeply concerned that even the most minimalist form of annexation would lead to increased violence and loss of life, as walls are erected, security forces deployed and the two populations brought into closer proximity. The existing two-tier system of law in the same territory will become embedded, with devastating impacts on the lives of Palestinians who have little or no access to legal remedy... The shockwaves of annexation will last for decades, and will be extremely damaging to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians.*"

On 29 June, the World Council of Churches issued a statement warning that "*the planned annexation of Palestinian territories by the Government of Israel would be a serious obstacle for the achievement of justice and peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It will undermine even more the rights of*

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On 29 June, the **World Council of Churches** issued a statement warning that "the planned annexation of Palestinian territories by the Government of Israel would be a serious obstacle for the achievement of justice and peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It will undermine even more the rights of Palestinians, reducing their mobility, their access to land and livelihoods, to adequate infrastructure and basic services. It will increase forced displacement, and it could prevent humanitarian organizations' access in order to provide basic services and the necessary lifesaving interventions."

On 2 July, **Amnesty International** warned that moves towards further annexation of Palestinian land "would mean a continuation of Israeli settlement expansion. It would also further entrench policies of institutionalized discrimination and mass human rights violations that Palestinians face in the OPT as a result of the occupation, including systematic denial of civil and political rights of Palestinians, as well as violations of other rights such as freedom of movement, equality and non-discrimination."

On 9 July, Israeli human rights NGO **Yesh Din** issued a legal opinion concluding that "Continued creeping legal annexation, let alone official annexation of a particular part of the West Bank through legislation that would apply Israeli law and administration there, ... could mean strengthening the argument, which already is being heard, that the crime of Apartheid is not committed only in the West Bank. That the Israeli regime in its entirety is an apartheid regime. That Israel is an Apartheid state."

As we have repeatedly cautioned, the absence of accountability has enabled Israel's colonization and annexation of Palestinian land, rapidly leading to its imposition of a one-State reality of apartheid that must be urgently averted. Israel's crime spree in Occupied Palestine must be stopped, and only collective action can achieve this. It is high time for the international community to impose lawful, targeted and immediate sanctions on the occupying Power in response to its grave breaches of international law, to deter further violations against the Palestinian people, promote justice, and create the conditions for peace.

As sagely stated on 7 July in an open letter by **Christian Clergy from the Bethlehem Area**, "While support for a two-state solution among the international community remains strong in rhetoric, there has been no tangible or coordinated action to block steps toward de jure annexation of the West Bank, let alone gross violations of human rights that have paved the way to it over the past 53 years. In allowing Israel to use its control over Palestinians to separate people and land, and in failing to hold Israel accountable to human rights violations in the Occupied Territory, the international community has rendered the vision it is purportedly promoting an impossibility."

We are grateful for the many reaffirmations from around the world on the need to end impunity and ensure accountability, including by the Belgian parliament on 26 June, the leader of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom on 27 June, thirteen members of the US Congress on 30 June, the Chilean Senate on 1 July, the Dutch parliament on 2 July, eleven European foreign ministers on 14 July, Mexican parliamentarians on 22 July, among many others.

In this regard, on 16 June, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967 also stressed "Should Israel proceed with any form of annexation after 1 July – even if it is 'annexation-lite', consisting of several settlement blocs instead of the announced 30 per cent of the West Bank – the European Union must lead the world in imposing accountability measures. Any amount of annexation is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, and a fundamentally illegal act."

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Moreover, we welcome the letter signed by over 40 international women leaders on 1 July in response to an appeal by Palestinian women for action to stop annexation and end the Israeli occupation, as well as the principled voices of 1.6 million global citizens who signed an Avaaz petition entitled "Palestine must live", standing against annexation and calling for justice and peace.

In this time of existential crisis, Palestinians, like the rest of the world, are also struggling to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its severe health, social and economic impact. As of this date, the State of Palestine has confirmed 10,923 cases of the virus – 75 of which are in the illegally blockaded Gaza Strip – and 67 deaths as a result of the virus. Despite limited resources and severe restrictions and hardships imposed by the occupation, our national institutions are exerting all efforts to respond to this crisis.

Yet, Israel continues to hamper our efforts to combat the virus, making a severe crisis even worse. In Al-Khalil, one of the hardest hit areas in Palestine, the occupying Power once again destroyed a coronavirus testing clinic. Additionally, the occupying Power continues to jeopardize the lives of Palestinian prisoners, including children, who are being detained in its jails in this time of pandemic. We must draw urgent attention to the plight of a prisoner, Kamal Abu Waer, age 46, who suffers from cancer and has also been infected by the virus and is in critical health. The Palestinian leadership calls for the necessary medical treatment and for his immediate release. We hold Israel responsible for the well-being of all Palestinians being unlawfully held captive by the occupation and call for their release.

As our people continue to suffer this belligerent, illegal occupation in all its forms, we appeal once again to the international community, including the Security Council, to speak up and take responsible action. We appeal to all States to stand firmly in defense of international law and in respect of the resolutions adopted across the decades on the Palestine question, to protect human rights, to salvage the prospects for a just peace based on the two-State solution, and to preserve the international rules-based order that is under such serious threat. We are at a critical moment with so much at stake and the time for united action is now.

This letter is in follow-up to our 689 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 26 June 2020 (A/ES-10/xxx-S/2019/xxx) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter made available to the members of the Security Council for their immediate, valuable consideration and also distributed as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

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Dr. Riyad Mansour

Minister, Permanent Observer



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